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ABSTRACT

Project STOP, a comprehensive conflict resolution program, was piloted in 15 middle schools in 1991-92. This report provides an overview of STOP's inception and results. The project incorporated three components to help schools deal more effectively with conflict: (1) student peer mediation; (2) classroom instruction in conflict resolution; and (3) parent training. The report is divided into four sections. An introduction gives a project overview and discusses evaluation issues and methodology. A second part describes the experiences and perceptions of participants and outlines the conflict resolution training and support. The largest section, section 3, gives particulars on project implementation and assessment and includes information on mediation, curriculum, parent training, and other facets of the program. Section 4 measures some of the successes of STOP and offers recommendations. In terms of success, some of the indicators of the program's viability included its endorsement by many in the school community, the incorporation of the STOP curriculum in instructional styles, a recognition of alternatives to violence and a place to go in the school where problems can be resolved peacefully, students mediating cases successfully, increases in the number of students who want to be mediators, and in the number of self-referrals to mediation. (RJM)

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OER Report

PROJECT SCHOOLS TEACHING OPTIONS FOR PEACE (STOP) TEEN MEDIATION PROJECT

1993-94

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Debates on the inadequacies of public education have focused largely on student academic achievement while paying little attention to the development of students' social skills, particularly the skills of cooperation and conflict resolution. This is the case despite the fact that considerable evidence suggests that inadequate social skills lead to the disintegration of personal relationships, substance abuse, and problems in the school and the workplace.

Although conflict is a normal occurrence in all schools, it appears to be more pervasive among adolescents attending large, inner-city schools with limited resources and diverse student populations. This is not surprising, as school is the center of the adolescent's social life and school schedules force students to spend much of each day in the presence of their adversaries, as well as their friends. When school fights occur, they inevitably become public events in which even spectators must "take sides" and where hostilities that remain unresolved can resume at a later date. The mere act of attending school then becomes stressful for the disputants, and their academic work often suffers.

Numerous conflict resolution programs have sprung up in schools across the nation designed to help students and staff manage disputes better. Responding to the need to expand conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in New York City, in 1991-92, the Fund for New York City Public Education, in conjunction with the Board of Education of the City of New York, and three outside agencies (Educators for Social Responsibility Metropolitan Area, Effective Alternatives in Reconciliation Services, and Victim Services) developed Schools Teaching Options for Peace (Project STOP).

Project STOP, a comprehensive conflict resolution program, was piloted in 15 middle schools in 1991-92. The project, directed at helping schools deal more effectively with conflict, consisted of three components: student peer mediation, classroom instruction in conflict resolution, and parent training. By the 1993-94 school year, 40 middle schools were participating in STOP.

In order to expand the availability of peer mediation services in middle schools still further, Victim Services also implemented a Teen Mediation Project (T.M.P.) in an addi- tional 15 schools in 1992-93. The T.M.P. focuses exclusively on peer mediation; it does not have a curriculum or parent component.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The Office of Educational Research's (OER) 1993-94 evaluation of STOP and T.M.P. used in-depth interviews in nine schools selected by program staff and surveys administered in T.M.P. project schools. The sample included seven STOP schools and two T.M.P. schools stratified according to level of implementation (high, medium, or low) as determined by project staff. The evaluation focused on the level of commitment on the part of participating schools and the level of support from project staff that are required to effect positive change in school climate and in the management of conflict on the part of staff, students, and parents. Another major issue explored in the evaluation is the difference between the models used by the two programs--peer mediation alone (Teen Mediation Project) or peer mediation, direct instruction, and parent training (STOP). The major findings in each of these areas are described below.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Support From Project Staff

In terms of staff development, all of the curriculum staff developers reported modeling lessons, co-teaching lessons, and assisting with lesson planning. The majority of teachers concurred with this assessment citing assistance from the staff developers ranging from visiting the classroom to give advice; co-teaching some of the lessons; helping to plan conflict resolution lessons; providing appropriate demonstration lessons; giving useful feedback; and being readily available to answer questions by telephone.

The mediation staff developers reported providing ongoing training and support to the mediation teachers beyond the initial training in various ways, although, like the curriculum staff developers, their efforts were generally directed at responding to teachers' needs. After the initial three-day training, staff developers' support to the student mediators focused largely around skill building, discussions of issues related to mediation, and encouragement of student ownership of the process. All of the peer mediators felt that the training they received and the practice they've engaged in helped them to become good mediators.

The nature and extent of the ongoing training and support provided to parents by staff developers in the sample schools varied considerably from monthly meetings with parents to help them develop conflict resolution skills to encouraging parents to call staff developers at home with questions or problems.

Support From Project Schools

In describing how they supported the mediation component, principals typically said that they released mediation teachers and student mediators to attend training sessions and mediation hearings, provided space for mediations, attended training sessions when possible, and met with students to encourage and praise them. For the most part, principals asserted that they did not play an active role in supporting the curriculum teachers, apart from giving them release time to attend training activities and, in one school, excusing them from faculty conferences so that they would have additional time to meet together.

Project coordinators detailed a wide range of project responsibilities they had assumed related to conflict resolution training and case mediation. Most of the project coordinators indicated that they "oversee the entire mediation process." Coordinators from both high- and medium-implementing schools indicated that they coordinated curriculum-related activities, such as ensuring that teachers have the materials, scheduling meetings with the curriculum staff developer and in other ways acting as liaison between teachers and the staff developer.

Asked in what ways, if any, school staff who are not part of the project team have been supportive of mediation, teachers generally reported that they referred students for mediation and released them to participate in mediation cases (albeit sometimes reluctantly), and for the most part endorsed the program even though they have not been involved with it themselves. Such support was not universal, however, and some respondents indicated that teachers continued to send students to the dean instead of to mediation, in some cases because "they still think that peer mediation means coddling the kids, and they want immediate punishment."

With regard to support for the curriculum component from school staff who are not members of the project team, only two curriculum teachers reported that there are other teachers in their school who are interested in using the curriculum in their own classes, or who are generally supportive of conflict resolution instruction.

Mediation

Criteria cited by the mediation staff developers as important in the selection of mediation teachers were a sincere interest in participating in the program, sufficient time to devote to it, and good rapport with students. Some respondents also believed that the mediation teachers should be a diverse group that is reflective of the student body with regard to race, ethnicity, and gender. Similarly, when selecting peer mediators,

mediation staff developers felt strongly that students should have a strong interest in being a mediator and that collectively they should be a diverse group that is representative of the student body as a whole--not only with regard to gender, race, and ethnicity, but including special education and English as a Second Language students, and those who have in the past been "negative leaders" (e.g., involved in fights) as well as positive role models (e.g., those who excel academically or in athletics).

Considerable majorities of project coordinators identified property disputes, boyfriend/girlfriend arguments, personal insults, and racial/ethnic problems as issues that have been mediated in their school. In addition to disputes involving individual students (which were mediated in all schools), conflicts involving groups of students, and between staff and students were mediated in about one-half of the sample schools.

Curriculum

Among the criteria that curriculum staff developers believed should be used in selecting teachers to teach the STOP curriculum were a good rapport with students, flexibility and willingness to teach in a non-traditional setting, and a personal philosophy that is consistent with the tenets of the program. A majority of project coordinators said that in their school the STOP curriculum is taught in grades 7 and 8.

Most of the project coordinators thought that the curriculum could best be integrated into language arts classes since, as one respondent explained, "there's conflict in literature" although most curriculum teachers thought that social studies was a "natural," since it was easy to relate conflict resolution to issues in history.

Parent Training in Conflict Resolution

According to the parent staff developers, training for parents was directed at helping parents to understand issues from their child's perspective, opening up lines of communication, and giving parents the tools for dealing more effectively with their own anger--essentially assisting them in developing a broader understanding of conflict and ways of solving problems within the family, including differences between the adult members.

Importance of Various Components

STOP and T.M.P. represent different school conflict resolution program models in that the former includes the direct teaching of conflict resolution concepts and skills to students and parents in addition to peer mediation, whereas the latter consists exclusively of peer mediation services. Since implementing the STOP model requires a substantially greater

commitment of time and resources than the T.M.P. model, key participants were asked to assess how important to helping students learn to manage conflict effectively they consider each of the components.

All of the principals interviewed agreed that peer mediation was essential. All but one of the principals (STOP school) considered the curriculum component to be very important as well. Mediation teachers, for the most part, said that all three components are essential. As one person expressed it, "All are essential, one reinforces the others. Each continues the idea of the philosophy." However, most agreed that peer mediation is the most significant because "it gives students real practice in implementing the principles of conflict resolution."

All principals again, believed that parent training in conflict resolution was vital, including T.M.P. principals who did not have this component as part of their program and STOP principals in schools were parents where not yet involved. Exclaiming that learning how to solve problems begins at home, one T.M.P. principal speculated that "this might actually be the most important piece." However, most principals also acknowledged that it was the most difficult component to implement.

Factors Facilitating Implementation

Among the factors that principals believed contributed to the successful implementation of the project in their school were committed and competent staff (project coordinator and teachers), dedicated and talented student mediators, excellent training by the cooperating agencies and ongoing dialogue with the school, and a supportive administration. Overall, project team members agreed.

In general, project team staff tended to be open and flexible, demonstrated by their willingness to learn the principles of conflict resolution and explore ways of using them in their relationships with students and others. In addition, the more successful STOP schools tended to have a more integrated or holistic approach to the program, reflected, for example, in training of the project coordinator in all three program components and collaboration among team members from different groups--e.g., involvement of peer mediators in the training of parents, and the co-teaching of lessons by parents and teachers.

Factors Impeding Implementation

In the opinion of the principals, factors that impeded the project's implementation included lack of time--to mediate cases, train participants, teach the curriculum, do the necessary paperwork; inadequate parent involvement; lack of referrals;

belief on the part of some individuals that students can't handle mediations; and inadequate understanding of the project at the outset and of what implementing it would entail. Project coordinators cited lack of district support, insufficient time to accomplish everything that was needed, teachers' reluctance to release students and unwillingness to take on something new.

From the vantage point of the curriculum teachers, the major impediment to the project's success revolved around insufficient time to teach the STOP curriculum (because of other curriculum requirements and the fact that some classes met only two periods a week), or for team members to meet. In addition to insufficient coordinator time and lack of support from school administrators, the major impediments to school success in implementing the project, in the opinion of the mediation staff developers, were poor planning, recruitment of people not really interested in the program, and unrealistic expectations of immediate results.

School Self-Management

Since schools are expected to operate conflict resolution activities on their own after three years of project support, another issue explored as part of this evaluation was schools' progress toward self-management. Several principals said that they would need to "maintain linkage" with the cooperating agencies or require "some external backup," reflections of their anxiety about functioning without at least some outside support.

All of the project coordinators believed that they needed more training, not only in the conflict resolution process but in training other school staff participants. Curriculum staff developers emphasized the need for money and time to train curriculum teachers, as well as support from school and district administrators. Mediation staff developers, commenting on what was needed for schools to operate a successful peer mediation program, reiterated what curriculum staff developers said--i.e., a committed coordinator with enough time to manage the project, a school-centered capacity to train and support teachers and student mediators, and a supportive administration "to give time to the staff, set the tone, and send a message to the school that this program is important."

Assessment of Program Impact

Commenting on ways in which the project has affected school climate, respondents from all constituent groups said that people were now aware that there are alternatives to violence and a place in the school to go where disputes can be settled peacefully. Some teachers said that they spent a greater portion of classroom time dealing with conflict after the project was introduced in their school, whereas others said they spent less

time. However, in both instances the change was construed positively. In the former case, more time was devoted to discussing problems before they escalated; in the latter instance, students reportedly dealt more effectively with conflict situations on their own, or peer mediators in the class intervened and proposed that the dispute be resolved through mediation.

In dealing with their teenage children, parents reported expressing their anger less and listening more. Parents also commented on using strategies they had learned in exchanges with neighbors and with people at work. As one respondent said, "I apply the same listening skills. Never talk down to anyone. Everyone has an opinion and a right to this opinion."

Peer mediators reported that the most important things they learned by being a mediator included remaining neutral when mediating a case, and effectively using techniques such as role reversal and roleplaying. Students also commented on several aspects of being a mediator that they didn't like. As one peer mediator explained, "Some kids don't really want to solve their problems. Some disputants just want to fight." The peer mediators also admitted having difficulty with their role in the mediation process. One explained, "Sometimes I know that one person is guilty and it's hard to stay neutral." These concerns underscore the complexity of conflict resolution--i.e., mastery of the process requires much time and practice, and not all problems can be solved through peer mediation.

Most students stated that their experience as a peer mediator has had a positive effect on their relationships with other students in the school. Most also indicated that they have used their conflict resolution skills in their relationships with siblings, parents, and other relatives. Several reported acting as a mediator to resolve family conflicts. Half of the student mediators also said that their relationships with teachers have improved.

Among those aspects of conflict resolution instruction that curriculum students enjoyed most was being able to talk about different attitudes and stereotypes, listening to other students' opinions, and engaging in roleplays. Half of the curriculum students said that they had learned to resolve conflicts more effectively.

Reflecting on the most important measures of project success, school and Project STOP staff talked about issues related both to its implementation and impact. Measures of successful implementation included the overall endorsement of the program by the entire school community (including parents), the incorporation of the STOP curriculum in teachers' instructional styles, a high level of awareness of mediation services, students

mediating cases successfully, and an increase in the number of students who want to be mediators and in the number of disputants seeking out mediation on their own. All respondents cited important quantitative changes that demonstrated improvements in attitudes and behavior--most notably, fewer fights in and around the school and fewer students participating in them, and reductions in the number of suspensions.

Other important changes attributed to this conflict resolution project centered more on issues related to personal growth and development (for students, school personnel and parents), the quality of interpersonal relationships, and overall school climate. Foremost among these changes were improved communication and social skills, heightened self-esteem, increased tolerance for differences, ability to express anger in positive ways, greater assumption of leadership in school by parents, perceptions of the school as a safer place, and improved relationships between parents and students (at home) and between teachers and students.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the project's success was the interest expressed by all of the teachers, peer mediators, and parents interviewed in continuing to participate in the project. Several graduating peer mediators said they would like to continue mediating in high school; the magnitude of the conviction expressed by one mediator was particularly impressive: "If there isn't a mediation program in my high school, I'll start one and train others."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the evaluation, OER makes the following specific recommendations:

- Training in conflict resolution should be extended to other key school personnel not currently participating in the project in order to encourage broader support for the project's implementation--e.g., willingness to release students for project activities and refer students to mediation, and to more effectively infuse conflict resolution into the culture of the school.

- Staff development for curriculum teachers should include assistance in incorporating conflict resolution concepts into regular subject-area instruction. This will present a more integrated approach to learning and assuage the concerns of some principals and teachers that teaching conflict resolution takes time away from academic instruction.

- In view of the pivotal role of the project coordinator, schools need to find ways of providing individuals who serve in this capacity with sufficient time to devote to their school and STOP-related responsibilities. In addition, coordinators should be trained in all components in order to facilitate their schools' transition to self-management of the project. Training other participants in more than one component and encouraging greater collaboration among them would similarly promote independence, as well as a more integrated approach to project implementation.

- Ongoing training for peer mediators should continue to focus on helping them refine and extend their mediation-related skills, and also assist them in dealing with the negative attitudes and behaviors of some of their peers. Further, student mediators need to understand that conflict resolution is an evolving process that effects change over time.

- Peer mediators and mediation teachers should be a diverse group which is representative of the schools as a whole with regard to race, gender, and ethnic diversity; in addition, the student mediators should be selected from among the entire student population--e.g., special education and English as a Second Language students, students who are role models as well as those who have been "negative" leaders.

- Schools with limited resources should consider staggering the implementation of various project components, beginning with the one(s) they can handle most effectively; schools that do not already have a broad base of parent involvement might consider directing their energies initially at making parents feel welcome in the school more generally and establishing a small cadre of active parents who, in turn, could encourage parent participation in conflict resolution training.

- The selection of schools should be based on project-developed criteria that include the level of commitment and support considered necessary to ensure a reasonable degree of success; and schools should demonstrate at the outset that they have a clear understanding of what the project entails, the support they can expect to receive, and the specific ways in which they are expected to support its implementation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Debates on the inadequacies of public education have focused largely on student academic achievement (Deutsch, 1992) while paying little attention to the development of students' social skills, particularly the skills of cooperation and conflict resolution. This is the case despite the fact that considerable evidence suggests that inadequate social skills lead to the disintegration of personal relationships, substance abuse, and problems in the school and the workplace.

Psychologists believe that the propensity toward violence is learned early in life. This would suggest that youngsters should be taught more positive ways of handling grievances early on in order to reduce their propensity for violence when they become adolescents. Moreover, although family members and school staff are well situated to provide opportunities for children to develop social and moral perspectives, these types of exchanges are not "institutionalized" at home or in school (Opotow, 1993; Deutsch, 1992).

Although conflict is a normal occurrence in all schools, it appears to be more pervasive among adolescents attending large, inner-city schools with limited resources and diverse student populations. This is not surprising, as school is the center of the adolescent's social life and school schedules force students to spend much of each day in the presence of their adversaries, as well as their friends (Opotow, 1993). When school fights occur, they inevitably become public events in which even spectators must "take sides" and where hostilities that remain

unresolved can resume at a later date. The mere act of attending school then becomes stressful for the disputants, and their academic work often suffers.

Numerous conflict resolution programs have sprung up in schools across the nation designed to help students and staff manage disputes better. Responding to the need to expand conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in New York City, in 1991-92, the Fund for New York City Public Education, in conjunction with the Board of Education of the City of New York, and three outside agencies developed Schools Teaching Options for Peace (Project STOP).

Project STOP

The Board of Education of the City of New York, the Fund for New York City Public Education, Educators for Social Responsibility Metropolitan Area (E.S.R.-Metro), Effective Alternatives in Reconciliation Services (EARS), and Victim Services (V.S.), piloted Project STOP, a comprehensive conflict resolution program in 15 middle schools in 1991-92. The project, which was directed at helping schools deal more effec- tively with conflict, consisted of three components: student peer mediation, classroom instruction in conflict resolution, and parent training.

E.S.R.'s was responsible for providing training and technical assistance for the curriculum and parent components in all 15 schools, while EARS and V.S. were responsible for implementing the peer mediation component in five and ten schools, respectively. During the 1992-93 school year, the project expanded to

a total of 40 middle schools in all boroughs of New York City. A transitional teacher training component, designed to help schools begin to institutionalize the project was introduced in 1993-94.

Teen Mediation Program

In order to expand the availability of peer mediation services in middle schools, Victim Services also implemented the Teen Mediation Project (T.M.P.) in an additional 15 schools in 1992-93. The T.M.P. focuses exclusively on peer mediation; it does not have a curriculum or parent component.

EVALUATION ISSUES

The evaluation issues addressed by the Office of Educational Research (OER), in its 1993-94 evaluation of Project STOP and T.M.P., were determined in consultation with staff members from the Fund for New York City Public Education, E.S.R.-Metro, EARS, and V.S. Two major issues addressed in the evaluation relate to the level of commitment on the part of participating schools, and the level of support from project staff that are required to effect positive change in school climate and in the management of conflict on the part of staff, students, and parents. Another issue explored in the evaluation is the difference between the models used by the two programs--peer mediation alone (Teen Mediation Project) or peer mediation, direct instruction, and parent training (Project STOP).

More specifically the issues addressed in the evaluation include the nature and extent of principals' involvement in the program; the process by which mediation and negotiation teachers

and peer mediators were selected; the adequacy of training and on-site support provided by project staff developers to program participants; the extent to which the conflict resolution curriculum is taught in the schools; the efforts on the part of participating schools to become self-sufficient in managing the program, including the degree of support for transitional teacher training; and parents' assessment of the training provided in conflict resolution, and the ways in which they have used this training in their interactions with students and school staff.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

OER utilized several methodologies in its 1993-94 evaluation of STOP and T.M.P. in order to begin to identify factors which contribute most to program success. Using a case study approach, OER staff conducted in-depth interviews with key program participants in nine sample schools selected by project staff. The sample included seven STOP schools and two T.M.P. schools stratified according to level of implementation (high, medium, or low) as determined by project staff. Factors considered when designating schools as high, medium, or low implementing included schools' level of commitment and support for the program.

In each sample school, OER staff interviewed the principal, project coordinator, one actively involved parent, a mediation teacher and the staff developers. A curriculum teacher was also interviewed in STOP schools. Group interviews with a sample of peer mediators, and students who had received classroom instruction in conflict resolution but were not mediators

(hereafer referred to as curriculum students) were also conducted. In all, nine principals, nine project coordinators, four parents, 11 staff developers, seven curriculum teachers, eight mediation teachers, 20 curriculum students, and 29 peer mediators comprised the sample.

In addition, OER mailed questionnaires to project coordinators in 12 of the 15 T.M.P. schools* which asked questions about the model operating in these schools (peer mediation only) and about coordinators' perceptions of the impact of this model compared with the Project STOP model of peer mediation, direct negotiation instruction, and parent training. A total of six T.M.P. coordinators returned completed surveys for a response rate of 50 percent.

Finally, O.E.R. staff reviewed relevant project documents, including curriculum and training manuals as part of its evaluation of the program.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Chapter I includes an overview of the STOP and T.M.P. programs, issues addressed in the evaluation, evaluation methodology, and scope of this report. Chapter II presents the findings, based on the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Issues related to project implementation and impact are discussed in Chapter III. Conclusions and recommendations are offered in Chapter IV.

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*Two of the 15 T.M.P. schools were included in the interview sample; another was not surveyed because, having joined the project in February 1994, it did not have enough experience implementing it to answer the evaluation questions.

II. EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

The findings presented in this chapter are based on OER interviews with school participants in the nine sample schools (seven STOP and two T.M.P.) and project staff developers assigned to these schools, as well as survey data received from project coordinators in six T.M.P. schools that were not included in the interview sample. (Although there were differences in the questions posed in the coordinator interviews and surveys, they address many of the same issues; consequently, where appropriate, the survey responses are included.)

Since a review of the findings did not reveal substantial differences between high-, medium-, and low-implementing schools, or between STOP and T.M.P. schools, overall, responses have been pooled for reporting purposes; where there are important differences among respondents from these groups, they have been noted.

School Participants

Project coordinators. Project coordinators in the interview schools held a wide range of positions. One project coordinator in a high-implementing school stated that this was [his] sole position in the school. The other project coordinators held various other positions: Three were teachers, one was a guidance counselor, one was a staff developer, one was head of the

behavior modification program, one was an administrative assistance, and one was a dean.

The project coordinators interviewed stated that they had been involved with the program for two or three years. However, while many of those in high- and medium-implementing schools said that they had been coordinating the program for three years, most of the coordinators in the low-implementing schools had been coordinating the program for two years.

Mediation teachers. The mediation teachers (N=8)* included subject-area teachers, and special education, bilingual, and resource room teachers, as well as other school staff who did not have major classroom teaching responsibilities such as a guidance counselor and head of the behavior modification center. All had participated in the project for at least two years.

Curriculum teachers. The curriculum teachers (N=7) included classroom teachers, teachers of specific subjects such as health education, music, communication arts, English as a Second Language, and one teacher who also served as an ombudsperson and dean of guidance. Collectively, they taught the conflict resolution curriculum in all grades (6-8), and all but one respondent taught it in at least two grades. All of the teachers had been involved in the project for two or more years.

Parents. Of the four parents interviewed in the STOP schools, one had been involved since its inception in 1991-92,

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*In one school the mediation teacher was newly trained and had not as yet worked with the student mediators.

two had been participating for two years, and one was new to the project this year.

Principals. A total of nine principals were interviewed--seven in the STOP schools and two in the T.M.P. schools.

Students. A total of 29 peer mediators participated in interviews with OER staff. Close to half (45 percent) were in the eighth grade, 24 were percent ninth graders, 17 percent were seventh graders, and 14 percent were sixth graders. Most (59 percent) had been mediators for at least two years. In addition be being trained as peer mediators, about half (48 percent) reported that they had also received lessons on conflict resolution in their regular classes. A total of 20 students who had received instruction in the STOP curriculum (but who were not mediators) participated in interviews about these lessons. Nearly half (45 percent) of these students were in the sixth grade, 35 percent were in the seventh grade, and 20 percent were in the eighth grade. Relatively few (20 percent) said that they had had any instruction in this material during the 1992-93 school year.

Project Staff Developers

OER staff interviewed a total of 11 project staff developers assigned to the nine interview schools. Since many of the issues explored with these staff were specific to the particular school groups they were responsible for assisting--i.e., the curriculum teachers, mediation teachers, and parents--separate interview protocols were used for interviewing each

group of staff developers. However, since three of these project staff members served as both the curriculum and parent staff developer in their schools, two interviews were conducted with each of them (with any duplicate questions asked only once). In presenting the findings, the interviews have been summarized by type so that the issues appropriate to each project component would be clearly elucidated. Consequently, there were a total of six mediation staff developer interviews, five parent staff developer interviews, and three curriculum staff developer interviews.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING AND SUPPORT

A major issue explored as part of this evaluation was participants' perceptions of the training and other assistance they received in implementing the project. Since both the project and participating schools were expected to support its implementation, the roles assumed by each were investigated.

Support from Project Staff

Assistance to curriculum teachers. In describing how they provided ongoing training and support to curriculum teachers, all of the curriculum staff developers reported modeling lessons, co-teaching lessons, and assisting with lesson planning. This sometimes included help in integrating the conflict resolution curriculum into subject-area instruction, or visualizing and dramatizing parts of the curriculum, but the staff developers emphasized listening to teachers and being responsive to their needs.

In commenting on the strategies that they found most useful in assisting curriculum teachers, staff developers stressed the importance of being attentive to teachers' concerns about teaching the STOP curriculum, which was new to them, in addition to their regular subject areas. To this end, one staff developer encouraged teachers to "relax and have fun," and to teach those portions that they feel most comfortable with first; another helped teachers to individualize the curriculum in ways that are consistent with their particular teaching style and to utilize some of the curriculum's central techniques to manage their classes more effectively. One staff developer noted that she made it clear to teachers that she is there to help them, not evaluate them; another believed strongly in encouraging teachers to become independent relatively soon. All of the staff developers, then, stressed the importance of being attentive to teachers' feelings, or as one respondent put it, "listening more than presenting."

One interview question presented the curriculum teachers with a list of specific ways in which the curriculum staff developer assigned to their school was expected to assist them, and asked them to indicate which of these were actually provided. Most of the curriculum teachers (N=4-5 out of 7) indicated that they received help in all of the ways presented. According to the majority of teachers, then, assistance from the staff developers consisted of the following: visiting the classroom to give advice; co-teaching some of the lessons; helping to plan

conflict resolution lessons; providing appropriate demonstration lessons; giving useful feedback; and being readily available to answer questions by telephone. One teacher explained that the staff developer wanted to help in all of these ways, but that scheduling problems made this difficult.

Requests for additional assistance included help in learning new techniques and ways of integrating conflict resolution lessons into different subject areas. Teachers also wanted more opportunities to network with their colleagues on a regular basis. One respondent contended that there should be a mandate regarding which students receive instruction and how often, a viewpoint which suggests the need for stronger support for the program on the part of school leadership.

Assistance to mediation teachers. The mediation staff developers reported providing ongoing training and support to the mediation teachers beyond the initial training in various ways, although, like the curriculum staff developers, their efforts were generally directed at responding to teachers' needs. However, since these, as well as other factors (such as time constraints) were different from school to school, the particular ways in which staff developers worked with the mediation teachers also varied. In some schools the emphasis was on helping teachers with planning and discussing problems--e.g., improving the referral system, whereas in other schools, time was devoted largely to skill building. In one school, the staff developer reported that he assisted teachers indirectly, through his work

with students--primarily by observing mediations (at which a trained adult is always present) and providing feedback. In another school, where teachers were losing interest in the program because of the small number of cases, the staff developer concentrated on getting them to "pull together," and brainstorming about other ways of generating interest in mediation within the school. Some staff developers also reported meeting with the project coordinator because of the key role this individual plays. As one staff developer said, "a strong coordinator keeps the mediation teachers involved."

In discussing those instructional strategies that proved to be most successful in working with mediation teachers, the mediation staff developers emphasized interactive activities such as roleplays which "help people look at conflict from a broader perspective"; listening and giving them opportunities to vent their feelings; and having the adults attend the student training as co-trainers, where they practiced being a facilitator of the student mediators as well as the conflict resolution skills they had learned in their own training sessions. One staff developer said that learning how to be neutral and to intervene without undermining the student mediators' authority were the most valuable lessons for the mediation teachers. With respect to the format of the training, one staff developer observed that school-based training, where participants developed a sense of trust and were able to communicate with each other, was more effective than training conducted citywide (i.e., on a large and impersonal

scale) because it "creates a stronger team that works together more effectively." However, program staff noted that opportunities for teachers to network and share the ideas with participants in other schools--experiences which teachers' themselves requested--also proved to be valuable.

In order to get an overall picture of the nature of the assistance provided to mediation teachers, one interview question presented a list of specific kinds of assistance and asked teachers to indicate which they had received. All respondents said that the staff developer had explained concepts of conflict resolution, provided demonstrations of mediations, provided opportunities to practice conflict resolution skills, and worked with the peer mediators to develop skills; seven of the eight teachers interviewed also stated that the staff developer observed mediation hearings and gave feedback, and assisted with logistical issues, such as space and scheduling. (Only one teacher claimed that the staff developer had not provided any assistance.) Like the curriculum teachers, the mediation teachers expressed the need for continued exposure to new ideas and techniques.

Assistance to peer mediators. After the initial three-day training, staff developers' support to the student mediators focused largely around skill building, discussions of issues related to mediation, and encouragement of student ownership of the process. One staff developer stressed with students the importance of these skills in everyday life, and had them

practice using them. In describing those instructional strategies that proved most effective in working with the peer mediators, the staff developers emphasized the following: interactive, participatory activities that promote listening, sharing and team building; opportunities for immediate practice of newly learned skills; and the use of realistic language and situations in skits and roleplays. Noted, too, was the value of working with students in small groups, providing intense experiences, exploring the issues and feelings that underlie conflict, and encouraging students to express their opinions in order to develop listening skills and provide a kind of "social barometer" of student beliefs and attitudes. One staff developer also talked about keeping activities "kinetic, upbeat, and as much fun as possible."

All of the peer mediators felt that the training and practice helped them the most in becoming good mediators. Specific topics they mentioned included the following: role-playing, which "helped me figure out how things are going to be"; persuasion techniques; the poster in the mediation room that lists, in order, the steps that are used in mediation so that "if we forget a step we can quickly look at the board and remember what we are supposed to do"; listening skills; and paraphrasing, that is, "repeating what disputants say so they know you are listening." Most of the students expressed the need for more help with specific techniques or aspects of the mediation process, such as creative questioning, paraphrasing, getting

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disputants to talk, and closing a mediation session. The most commonly expressed need, however, was for help in maintaining their neutrality. As one mediator confessed, "I still sometimes take sides"; another mediator said wistfully, "I wish I could keep from expressing my opinion on my face." Many students also requested more practice sessions in between cases.

Assistance to parents. The nature and extent of the ongoing training and support provided to parents by staff developers in the sample schools varied considerably. One respondent reported meeting monthly with parents to prepare them to give workshops in her absence, and to brainstorm with them about community resources that might be tapped in support of the project (e.g., the use of a neighborhood church as a site for future workshops); two of the five staff developers met with parents several times after the initial training and invited parents to contact them by phone to discuss other issues if necessary. One staff developer encouraged parents to call her at home with questions or problems. Only one respondent reported having no contact with parents after the initial training, explaining that subsequent training of parents was conducted by the project teachers.

In describing instructional strategies that were most helpful in working with parents, the parent staff developers stressed small-group settings in which parents were actively engaged--e.g., dialogues, demonstrations, and roleplays. These included, for example, a lesson in active listening in which participants related childhood experiences and "early messages"

received, and an activity which demonstrated the power of words to hurt, or alternatively, to affirm. One staff developer said that it was important that the content of the activity be something parents can relate to; she also emphasized the importance of making parents feel comfortable and giving them legitimacy by affording them the opportunity to express themselves in their own language (thus the need for someone who is bilingual to translate at training sessions).

Parents claimed that learning how to communicate with their children more effectively was the most valuable part of their training. In the words of one parent: "I learned more to listen than to shout, to use positive words to build self-esteem rather than put-downs. You get more response to positive than negative." This parent also commented on the value of the skits followed by discussion, which afforded her the opportunity to understand conflicts from both the parent's and child's perspective: "We got to see the situation from the child's and parent's position. When we are doing something we don't see it. When someone else does it, we get to see it."

Assistance to project coordinators. The project coordinators considered the support provided by the staff developers in carrying out their project-realted responsibilities helpful, although they did not elaborate on the specific kinds of assistance provided.

SUPPORT FROM PROJECT SCHOOLS

Mediation

Support from principals. In describing how they supported the mediation component, principals typically said that they released mediation teachers and student mediators to attend training sessions and mediation hearings, provided space for mediations, attended training sessions when possible, and met with students to encourage and praise them. One principal in an high-implementing school indicated that he had mediated cases and participated in project orientation sessions. Conversely, principals in two low-implementing schools indicated that they acted as facilitators, largely by giving release time, but as one put it, "the coordinator does the rest."

In response to an interview question which presented a list of specific ways in which principals could have facilitated their efforts, all of the mediation teachers indicated that the principal in their school provided release time for project activities, referred students for mediation, provided space for the hearing of disputes, and encouraged schoolwide support for the program. About half of the respondents also said that principals attended mediation-related training sessions (N=5) and helped to recruit student mediators (N=3).

Support from project coordinators. Project coordinators detailed a wide range of project responsibilities they had assumed related to conflict resolution training and case mediation. With regard to training, the project coordinators

generally reported that they worked in collaboration with staff developers in developing agendas, coordinated training dates and places, and attended the training that was provided for other project team members. One respondent stated, "I do all the administrative legwork. I ensure that they get there and that it is ongoing." Two of the coordinators--one in a medium- and one in a low-implementing school--said that they actually conducted some of the training, which involved working with teachers and peer mediators on the technique of roleplaying.

Most of the project coordinators indicated that they "oversee the entire mediation process." This involved taking part in the selection of the student mediators, making decisions about which conflicts should be mediated (and which constituted emergencies), doing intakes on students referred for mediation, arranging mediation schedules for the teachers, peer mediators, and the disputants, and assisting in mediation sessions.

In response to a question regarding the specific ways in which the project coordinator assisted them,* the majority of mediation teachers said that they scheduled mediation cases and meetings with the staff developers, and a somewhat smaller majority said that they participated in or gave advice about the mediation of disputes, participated in or gave advice about the

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*The mediation teacher interviewed in one school (low-implementing) was also the project coordinator, and thus could not answer this question.

training of the peer mediators, and referred students to mediation.

Support from other school staff. Asked in what ways, if any, school staff who are not part of the project team have been supportive of mediation, teachers generally reported that they referred students for mediation and released them to participate in mediation cases (albeit sometimes reluctantly), and for the most part endorsed the program, even though they themselves have not been involved with it directly. Such support was not universal, however, and some respondents indicated that teachers continued to send students to the dean instead of to mediation, in some cases because "they still think that peer mediation means coddling the kids, and they want immediate punishment." Deans, in some schools, also preferred "to solve the problems themselves outside the conflict resolution program." As reported by project coordinators in the T.M.P. survey schools, the level of support from school staff not directly involved with the peer mediation program was comparable to that expressed by the mediation teachers. In the T.M.P. school that had joined the project during the current school year, the level of support was the lowest, suggesting that acceptance of the program tends to evolve over time.

Curriculum

Support from principals. For the most part, principals asserted that they did not play an active role in supporting the curriculum teachers, apart from giving them release time to

attend training activities and, in one school, excusing them from faculty conferences so that they would have additional time to meet together. A principal in one low-implementing school, however, reported observing classrooms where the STOP curriculum is taught, as well as talking to staff about conflict resolution and the need for them to be role models. Another principal maintained that the "weak link in the program" is that the same teachers always volunteer to teach the curriculum. What is needed, she continued, is for all teachers to be involved, and for the central Board of Education to provide for the requisite staff development.

All of the curriculum teachers said that the principal in their school supported their efforts by providing release time for project activities and encouraging schoolwide support. Five of the seven teachers also said that the principal attended curriculum-related activities.

Support from project coordinators. Coordinators from both high- and medium-implementing schools indicated that they coordinated curriculum-related activities, such as ensuring that teachers have the materials, scheduling meetings with the curriculum staff developer and in other ways acting as liaison between teachers and the staff developer, and taking care of all of the paperwork necessary for this project component. One coordinator from a high-implementing school participated in writing a "mini-curriculum" because the STOP curriculum is too long. Interestingly, project coordinators from the low-

implementing schools did not seem to be very involved in this component. One said that she had nothing to do with the curriculum, while another said, "I rely on support from the outside agencies." In the third low-implementing school, the project coordinator simply reported observing classes.

Several curriculum teachers added that the project coordinator in their school had participated in or given them advice about teaching the curriculum, and facilitated communication with other project team members.

Support from other school staff. With regard to support for the curriculum component from school staff who are not members of the project team, only two curriculum teachers reported that there are other teachers in their school who are interested in using the curriculum in their own classes, or who are generally supportive of conflict resolution instruction.

Parent Involvement

Principals generally reported having little or no involvement in the parent component, attributing this for the most part to the fact that parent involvement in the project, overall, was minimal or non-existent.

Project coordinators said that they tried to encourage parent involvement in the project by calling them and sending them information about the program. One coordinator for a high-implementing school worked with the E.S.R. staff developer and attended parent workshops. Nevertheless, several coordinators

(across implementation status) admitted that this component was the most challenging part of the program.

However, the four parents who were interviewed cited various ways in which they believed the schools had encouraged parent involvement in the program. These included the provision of child care, flyers sent home to ask parents about the most convenient times for meetings, attempts to enlist the help of parents of the student mediators in recruiting other parents, and various joint efforts between parents and teachers through the Parent Teachers Association.

Overall Project Implementation

Principals' support for the project coordinators typically took the form of providing them with the time to devote to the program, although only one principal, from a high-implementing school, said she had made this a full-time position. (Another high-implementing school principal tried to give the coordinator compensatory time to carry out project responsibilities.) A principal from a medium-implementing school, however, considered the project coordinator's responsibilities to be part of her job description and not as additional, unpaid duties.

In describing their overall policy for releasing project participants for training and mediations, principals mentioned the use of substitutes to provide classroom coverage for teachers, having other school staff provide coverage on a voluntary basis, and scheduling activities during lunch and preparation periods, or other than during the school day--e.g.,

after school and on Saturdays. When necessary, principals released students from classes.

Participants' Assessment of Training

Of all the training and ongoing support they had received, curriculum teachers judged the workshops, demonstration lessons, and other assistance from the staff developer as the most helpful. More specifically, they valued the immediate feedback on how to handle particular situations, seeing and practicing how lessons should be taught, and exploring issues from different perspectives. Interactions with other teachers--e.g., discussions about ways of handling issues, and team planning and teaching--were also useful.

In discussing the training and ongoing support that has been most helpful, many mediation teachers believed that the initial training was the most valuable. As one mediation teacher said, "The initial training I received was helpful because it gave me a firm foundation for this work....All the other training has been reinforcement." Other areas mentioned by mediation teachers included specific conflict resolution techniques they had learned, such as "put ups and put downs," ways of talking to students, and ways for getting people to think about alternatives.

Project coordinators regarded support from the principal and the staff developers as the most helpful in carrying out their project-related responsibilities. Several also mentioned the "support and enthusiasm of the teen mediators," and one

coordinator cited the exchange of ideas with different schools: "When we have schools from different boroughs meeting together, we get new ideas on how the program operates all over."

III. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

MEDIATION

Selection of Mediation Teachers

Criteria cited by the mediation staff developers as important in the selection of mediation teachers were a sincere interest in participating in the program, sufficient time to devote to it, and good rapport with students. Some respondents also believed that the mediation teachers should be a diverse group that is reflective of the student body with regard to race, ethnicity, and gender. One staff developer, who noted that more female teachers (and students) typically get involved in mediation than males--who tend to see it as "not a macho thing"--contended that more male role models among both adults and students are needed. Time was perceived as both a scheduling issue--librarians and guidance counselors have more flexibility than classroom teachers, for example--and a willingness to commit extra time to the program.

Role and Responsibilities of Mediation Teachers

In describing their major responsibilities with respect to the mediation component, the mediation teachers described a wide range of activities. These included recruiting student mediators and participating in their selection, attending (and sometimes assisting with) student training, setting up the mediation room, referring students to mediation, reviewing cases, facilitating at sessions, discussing cases with peer mediators after mediations, and doing related paperwork--e.g., compiling monthly case

statistics. On average, they reported spending 31 hours on all project-related activities.

Selection of Student Mediators

In describing the criteria that they believed should be used in selecting the peer mediators, the mediation staff developers felt strongly, as with the selection of the teachers, that students should have a strong interest in being a mediator and that collectively they should be a diverse group that is representative of the student body as a whole--not only with regard to gender, race, and ethnicity, but including special education and English as a Second Language students, and those who have in the past been "negative leaders" (e.g., involved in fights) as well as positive role models (e.g., those who excel academically or in athletics). While several staff developers said that it would be helpful if students selected as peer mediators were articulate and outgoing, they added that students lacking these attributes often "grow tremendously" as a result of being in the program. The process, they argued, should be an open one, accessible to all students, "so that other students can relate to them." Important, too, is that students be well informed about what is expected of them as peer mediators and clear about what they are committing themselves to. Mediation teachers identified similar criteria, highlighting such traits as a sense of responsibility, maturity, willingness to learn conflict resolution procedures, ability to remain neutral, and "a hope and belief in nonviolence."

In explaining what criteria should be used in assigning peer mediators to particular cases, most project coordinators said that they generally took age, sex, language or country of origin of the disputants and mediators into consideration. Many also said that they tried to avoid pulling mediators out of major classes or assigning them to cases involving their friends. Several respondents said that they got to know some of the mediators well and were able to take into account their abilities and level of maturity. As one coordinator put it, "I look for students who are responsible, articulate, and available." Other factors included attendance and academic standing.

Description of Conflicts Mediated

Types of conflicts mediated. Considerable majorities of project coordinators identified property disputes (89 percent), boyfriend/girlfriend arguments (78 percent), personal insults (78 percent), and racial/ethnic problems (67 percent) as issues that have been mediated in their school. Principals generally cited verbal disputes such as "he said, she said" arguments, gossip, name-calling, and third-party rumors. One principal noted that racial tension in the school, stemming from the perception that one ethnic group receives preferential treatment, was at the root of many of the conflicts. Interestingly, this principal also reported that "there were many more self-referrals to mediation this year," suggesting growing acceptance of peer mediation on the part of students as a way of resolving problems.

In addition to disputes involving individual students (which were mediated in all schools), conflicts involving groups of students, and between staff and students were mediated in 56 percent and 44 percent of the sample schools, respectively. In 11 percent of the schools, conflicts between students and parents, and between school staff were also mediated. (Although similar patterns were generally evident from the T.M.P. surveys, in these schools there were no mediations between students and parents, or between school staff, and many fewer proportionately between staff and students.)

Referrals for Mediation

All project coordinators said that teachers and guidance counselors had referred disputes for mediation; to a large extent, so had deans, peer mediators, and principals (each mentioned by 89 percent of the coordinators), former disputants (78 percent), and security personnel (67 percent). Interestingly, one-third of the coordinators also said that parents had made referrals. Moreover, all of the coordinators said that sometimes students have sought out mediation services on their own, without being referred by others. (There were similar patterns in the T.M.P. schools, although only one coordinator said that parents made referrals.)

Conflicts Considered Inappropriate for Mediation

Nearly all principals said that there were conflicts that they considered inappropriate for mediation, foremost among which were those involving weapons, drugs, physical assaults, and

robbery. Several principals believed that it was not so much a question of the nature of the conflict, but the ability of the students involved to engage in the mediation process, or of the peer mediators to handle particularly difficult situations. Moreover, as one principal observed, both parties to a dispute had to agree to participate.

Interestingly, all of the coordinators from high- and medium-implementing schools maintained that there is no situation in which mediation should not at least be tried; whereas coordinators from low-implementing schools had various caveats--if a weapon is involved, if the disputants are seriously disturbed, or in cases where the process might lead to the divulgence of highly sensitive information.

CURRICULUM

Selection of Curriculum Teachers

Among the criteria that curriculum staff developers believed should be used in selecting teachers to teach the STOP curriculum were a good rapport with students, flexibility and willingness to teach in a non-traditional setting, and a personal philosophy that is consistent with the tenets of the program. One staff developer voiced the opinion that only teachers who want to be involved in this program should be selected, and cautioned that the practice followed by some principals of choosing teachers who have problems relating to students in the hopes that participation in the program will "change" them is ill-advised.

School Goals and Strategies

When asked their schools' goal regarding the student populations that will receive instruction in conflict resolution, the STOP principals gave various responses. While only one reported that all students were already receiving it, several respondents said that they would like to see all of their students benefit from this instruction but that they had reservations about achieving this. Their concern focused largely on interesting and training enough teachers. Several other principals were not sure which students should receive conflict resolution training, in one case because it takes classroom time away from other subjects.

Since other school administrators and teachers have expressed this concern about the loss of instructional time, principals were asked how their school ensured that the program did not interfere with subject-area instruction. Most principals dealt with this by various scheduling arrangements and/or by encouraging teachers to integrate the teaching of conflict resolution with their instruction of other subjects. In one school, mediation sessions were held during lunch and teachers met voluntarily after school or during their preparation period. In another school, students met for mediation during minor subjects, gym, or lunch. While acknowledging that the program does sometimes interfere with regular school functioning, one principal argued that conflict resolution skills "can be used in any curriculum." Another principal, who considered the

curriculum to be very important, encouraged all teachers who want to teach it, with the exception of those of mathematics, science, or any Regents subjects.

In describing what scheduling arrangements their school has adopted to insure that some targeted students do not receive instruction in the STOP curriculum from more than one teacher, while others do not receive it at all, three principals either didn't know or said that the issue had not been addressed. In one school, which was divided into three houses, only the core teachers (of language arts) teach it; in another school, only one teacher on a grade teaches conflict resolution. Finally, one principal contended that it didn't really matter if students received this instruction from more than one teacher since it would be "reinforcement," as well as "application of the theory to different areas."

Instruction in Conflict Resolution

Overview. A majority of project coordinators said that in their school the STOP curriculum is taught in grades 8 and 7 (78 and 67 percent, respectively); 44 percent mentioned grade 6, and 11 percent grade 9. The amount of time the curriculum teachers reported spending on all project-related activities varied widely--ranging from 20 to more than 95 percent--but was not correlated with their school's implementation designation of high, medium, or low. Estimations of the percentage of students in their school that have received instruction in conflict

resolution were similarly diverse, ranging from 10 to 100 percent.

Instructional issues. OER asked the curriculum teachers if there were any subject areas that they considered more appropriate for teaching the STOP curriculum than others. Three believed that the curriculum was important and could be used in any subject area, and that it should be integrated into all subjects. Social studies, in the opinion of several respondents, was a "natural," since it was easy to relate conflict resolution to issues in history. (One teacher, however, mentioned that other social studies teachers did not want to teach it because the regular curriculum takes up all their class time.) Some teachers felt that it could be part of an English or language arts unit, and one--who taught it as a separate unit--nevertheless believed that it could be taught in hygiene classes since the content relates to self-esteem and motivation. Most of the project coordinators thought the curriculum could best be integrated into language arts classes, "because," as one respondent explained, "there's conflict in literature." Other areas mentioned were social studies, drama, and health. One coordinator contended that "the curriculum can be integrated in a theme in any class."

In explaining their rationale for choosing the classes in which they taught the STOP curriculum, one teacher reported using it in all classes, while another followed guidelines set by the principal (but did not explain what these were). Those teachers

who selected particular classes (one taught only one class) offered different reasons for their decision: one chose those classes which met three times a week because she believed there was not enough time to teach the entire curriculum in those that met only twice (although she taught some of the lessons to the other classes); another teacher chose those classes in which there were problems, and thus a greater need for instruction in conflict resolution; still another respondent chose not to teach the curriculum in one class in which students had poor English language skills since these students received conflict resolution instruction in a Chinese class.

In response to a question about how much of the STOP curriculum they covered, and the factors that determined whether they taught all 34 lessons, four teachers said that they planned to cover the entire curriculum by the end of the school year, although one said she intended to modify the lessons because her eighth grade students find them "babyish." (A sixth grade teacher noted that her students liked the lessons because they were a break from the boredom of regular classroom instruction.) The two teachers who did not plan to use the whole curriculum said the lessons were too long or were too advanced for their students, and both adapted the lessons to better meet the needs of their children--e.g., condensing what's important, personalizing lessons, using incidents in school or historical conflicts. One teacher was not sure how much of the curriculum she would be able to teach because her school program had been

changed. At the time of the OER interviews in March, the average number of lessons taught by these teachers was 15, representing 44 percent of the total.

Overall, those aspects of the curriculum that were structured but which at the same time provided opportunities for students to be actively involved were, according to the curriculum teachers, the most useful for teaching conflict resolution. These included roleplays, ice breakers, openings and closings, sitting in a circle, or as one respondent put it: "Less teacher involvement and more student involvement. Letting students find out for themselves what is right and wrong rather than the teacher telling them." Specific strategies and lessons that teachers found most effective included roleplaying, put-ups and put-downs, (as taught in the "heart" exercises), lessons dealing with point of view, the win/win concept, the conflict web, good and poor listening, and body language. Moreover, all but one teacher agreed that the curriculum provided sufficient opportunities for students to put into practice the concepts they have learned, observing that they sometimes used the strategies in classroom situations.

PARENT TRAINING IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Goals

According to the parent staff developers, training for parents was directed at helping parents to understand issues from their child's perspective, opening up lines of communication, and giving parents the tools for dealing more effectively with their

own anger--essentially assisting them in developing a broader understanding of conflict and ways of solving problems within the family, including differences between the adult members. One staff developer believed that this training was particularly valuable for single parents who are raising adolescents alone.

There was also an expectation that conflict resolution training would lead to better communication between parents and school staff, and consequently to greater involvement of parents as partners in the education of their children. One staff developer reported that one school sought to show parents that the school is not a "foreign place, but one where they "have something to offer." To this end, she explained, in one school the assistant principals and deans gave a workshop directed at familiarizing parents with what the school is trying to accomplish, how they go about doing this, and the problems they encounter. In the process, teachers and administrators also learned more about parents' lives and the difficulties they face. Another staff developer expressed the hope that parents would become more organized and assertive in advocating for their children. Anticipated, too, was that improved interactions with children at home would "transfer" to the school setting. Project staff also hoped that parents trained in conflict resolution would help to recruit and train other parents, and eventually become leaders in combatting violence in their own communities.

Two of the parents interviewed said that they got involved in the project because it sounded generally interesting, while

two others explained that they wanted to help students--their own and others. Noting that "there is so much violence," one parent saw it as a way of helping "the community where I live," echoing the hope expressed above.

Recruitment of Parents

According to the parent staff developers, various strategies were used to recruit parents, although not all schools used the same approaches. These included flyers sent home with students, presentations as Parent Teachers Association (P.T.A.) meetings, announcements at special events, telephone calls by staff developers of parents to individuals suggested by the P.T.A. president, and by word of mouth from parents already involved in the program. One school made special efforts to involve the parents of peer mediators. In addition, one parent reported hearing about the program as the result of a problem her child was having at school.

SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS

Since the scheduling and coordination of additional activities (apart from the regular schedule) is traditionally difficult for schools in view of the many issues to be taken into account--e.g., Board of Education policies and procedures, contractual requirements, space limitations, and the reduced number of personnel with ever-expanding responsibilities--one question explored in the evaluation was how the sample schools handled the scheduling of various key project activities. Of

particular interest were approaches or strategies that proved to be successful.

In explaining how they carried out both their regular and project-related responsibilities, the project coordinators related a wide range of arrangements. A coordinator from a high-implementing school stated that because she is a full-time coordinator, there were no scheduling difficulties. Another coordinator set aside her preparation, lunch, and administrative periods to accomplish the necessary project-related tasks. The majority of other coordinators indicated that since they do not receive release time from their regular school duties, carrying out project responsibilities is a major problem that requires "fitting time in between my other responsibilities."

Finding time and space for project training and other in-school support activities was also difficult. For the most part, both students and staff were released from class for meetings with the staff developer and for off-site training sessions. With some lead time, however, most coordinators said that they were able to arrange for the release time.

To a large extent, the coordinators also relied on release time for scheduling mediation hearings, although they often used lunch periods to minimize the time students would be absent from class. They also noted making efforts to select mediation teachers to cover sessions during their free periods.

TEAM APPROACH

Unlike many other school activities where staff for the most part function independently, participants in the conflict resolution project are envisioned as a "team," and are encouraged to share ideas, discuss problems, and generally to collaborate. In explaining how project members in their school work as a team, all of the curriculm teachers said that they met with other team members to discuss their concerns, although not necessarily with all team members, or on a regular basis. Only one respondent, from a high-implementing school, specifically mentioned meeting with the parent coordinator. A teacher from a low-implementing school said that the school's guidance counselor also meets with team members to discuss cases. Several mediation teachers indicated that they met regularly and formally with various constituent team member groups, especially school staff to discuss problems and exchange ideas. Collaboration with parents tended to occur mainly on an informal basis because it is difficult for parents to attend meetings. Two teachers said that project members did not function as a team: One explained that "it wasn't set up that way by the principal and hasn't been scheduled that way." The other teacher stated that they're "moving more and more toward collaborative work."

IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS PROJECT COMPONENTS

STOP and T.M.P. represent different school conflict resolution program models in that the former includes the direct teaching of conflict resolution concepts and skills to students

and parents in addition to peer mediation, whereas the latter consists exclusively of peer mediation services. Since implementing the STOP model requires a substantially greater commitment of time and resources than the T.M.P. model, key participants were asked to assess how important to helping students learn to manage conflict effectively they consider each of the components.

Peer Mediation

All of the principals interviewed agreed that peer mediation was essential. One principal explained it this way: "The desire to please their peers is most important. There is less shame if they are mediated by their peers. This allows them to withdraw gracefully. Both can 'save face.' The two disputants are working together to solve the problem, rather than having it solved by an authority figure." The project coordinators, too, were unanimous is their estimation of the importance of peer mediation as the most critical component. As one coordinator stated, "Peer mediation directly impacts on the child and the child's relationships." This view of peer mediation was echoed by the curriculum teachers, some of whom saw it as a means of ensuring that conflicts are contained and demonstrating to students that "there are two sides to every situation."

Mediation teachers, for the most part, said that all three components are essential. As one person expressed it, "All are essential, one reinforces the others. Each continues the idea of the philosophy." However, most agreed that peer mediation is the

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most significant because "it gives students real practice in implementing the principles of conflict resolution." Some of the most valuable aspects of peer mediation, as they saw it, were that it allowed students to express their real feelings, gave them an alternative to violence, allowed them to rectify problems in a "win-win" situation without fear of punishment, and contributed to the establishment of a cooperative school spirit. The only limitation of the peer mediation component mentioned was that it only reaches a small percentage of the students.

Curriculum

All but one of the principals (STOP school) considered the curriculum component to be very important. Arguing that it was the "least important" part of the program, the dissenting principal explained that there was not enough time to teach conflict resolution effectively, and "those teachers who have cases of conflict in their classrooms may not be the best at teaching the curriculum." Taking alternative points of view, one principal believed that the curriculum provided needed direction even if teachers didn't "stick to [it] to the letter," while another contended that any training that enabled students to handle problems better was valuable. Two principals who considered the curriculum to be an important part of the process --one in a T.M.P. school and the other in a STOP school-- emphasized the importance of staff development for teachers.

Most project coordinators believed that direct teaching of the curriculum was very important because "it makes all students

aware and gives them other ways to deal with conflict." Another coordinator argued that it was "a way to reach more students..., and should be incorporated into all courses." Still another coordinator concurred, but maintained that consideration needed to be given to ways of integrating it more effectively. All of the T.M.P. coordinators agreed that instruction in conflict resolution would give students a better understanding of the process, and would assist them in using the concepts in their relationships with others.

The value of teaching conflict resolution directly, as perceived by the curriculum teachers, was related to the larger number of students that could be reached, the opportunities it afforded for sharing among students, its ability to stimulate students to think about things from different perspectives, and its usefulness in helping students to resolve conflicts themselves.

Both STOP and T.M.P. mediation teachers deemed this component important, too, because, unlike the peer mediation component, it had the potential for reaching a wide range of the student body. The only criticism came from a teacher in a low-implementing school who felt that the curriculum "did not provide students with the same depth and real-life practice" as the peer mediation experience.

Parent Involvement

All principals believed that parent training in conflict resolution was vital, including T.M.P. principals who did not

have this component as part of their program and STOP principals in schools where parents were not yet involved. Exclaiming that learning how to solve problems begins at home, one T.M.P. principal speculated that "this might actually be the most important piece." One STOP principal in a high-implementing school in which parents had received training, affirmed this belief in the importance of helping parents to develop conflict resolution skills, explaining that "parents use what they've learned, at home."

All project coordinators believed that this training had the potential for profoundly impacting on parents' lives. In the words of one coordinator: "Parents have conflicts with their children and other people; this training would give them the skills to effectively deal with these conflicts." However, the coordinators also acknowledged that this was the weakest component of the project, both because it was difficult to involve parents and unrealistic to expect those parents who received training to, in turn, train others.

Most of the curriculum and mediation teachers agreed that it was important for parents to learn these skills, especially so that they could reinforce at home what students learned in school about dealing with conflict. Several teachers indicated that parents reported using conflict resolution techniques at home; however, other teachers were less sanguine about involving parents, either because schools "cannot begin to meet the

challenge, especially with ethnic and language differences," or because it is so difficult to recruit them.

FACTORS FACILITATING IMPLEMENTATION

Perceptions of School Staff

Among the factors that principals believed contributed to the successful implementation of the project in their school were the following: committed and competent staff (coordinator and teachers), dedicated and talented student mediators, excellent training by the cooperating agencies and ongoing dialogue with the school, and a supportive administration. Overall, project team members agreed. The coordinator from one high-implementing school contended that the program was particularly successful in her school because she was able to devote all of her time to it. One curriculum teacher, elaborating on the qualities of an effective coordinator used such phrases as "open-minded," and "it can work, work with me." Several teachers also credited the support provided by the staff developers--one commented in particular on "staff developer team planning and team teaching."

Perceptions of Project Staff Developers

The staff developers were in a unique position to comment on factors that contributed to the project's success in that they were familiar with several schools, including but not limited to the sample schools. Consequently, in responding to questions about how successful schools handled various aspects of implementation (that typically present problems for schools), they had a broader frame of reference than did school

respondents, although they, too, cited the importance of cooperative school administrators and committed project coordinators and teachers. Their elaborations on several key issues and the role played by school staff are presented here because they illuminate some of the practical problems and solutions related to carrying out this conflict resolution project.

Scheduling training and on-site support activities. Coordinators who were well organized and had sufficient time gave advance notice to all parties concerned, sent reminders, enlisted the help of reliable people, checked on the availability of rooms well in advance, made necessary arrangements for food, and kept in touch with STOP staff developers regularly. In addition, project team members gave up preparation periods and assisted the coordinator voluntarily with other tasks.

Principals in successful schools allowed teachers to use the time assigned to them for mediation activities as administrative duty, released participants for training, and assigned coordinators adequate time to perform project activities. One staff developer relayed the story of a principal who acknowledged to the entire staff that the school would be "in a state of chaos" while eight staff members were attending conflict resolution training, and appealed to everyone to be patient and cooperative. During this period of time she combined classes, had assistant principals cover classes, (and provided some coverage herself), announced which teachers would be absent and

posted schedule changes in the hallway. "Interestingly," the staff developer added, "no fights occurred in the school during this time." This principal also met with teachers before the program was introduced to set up a tentative schedule, and involved the programming person who was expected to be flexible in making changes if necessary. In another school, the fact that there were a lot of posters advertising Project STOP lent it "a presence and sense of priority which made scheduling easier."

Scheduling mediation activities. Factors that facilitated the scheduling of mediation hearings included a well designed referral process that is known throughout the school, a master list of the schedules of all mediation teachers and peer mediations (including relevant information such as level of mediation experience and bilingual ability), a school staff that endorses the program and is willing to release students from class, and a well organized and dedicated coordinator who has the time to review the referrals and make all the necessary arrangements.

Obtaining space for mediations. The staff developers generally agreed that having a separate space dedicated to mediation that students can call their own was essential, and that principals who were committed to the program somehow found a way to obtain it. What's needed, she maintained was creativity. Two examples illustrate her point: one school decorated an unused boys' locker room; in another, the principal first tried the bookroom, and when that didn't work out he found a room in the

basement--"they did some 'hype' about it and named it 'the underground." Underscoring the point that where there's a will there's a way, another staff developer said, "They just do it."

Referring students for mediation. Schools that were successful were those in which there is widespread support for mediation as a vehicle for resolving conflict and the referral procedures are well publicized and easy to invoke (e.g., referral forms are readily available to students and staff). Several respondents commented on the importance of a strong and energetic coordinator who reaches out regularly to staff--e.g., to ensure that guidance counselors and assistant principals are familiar with the intake process and skilled at approaching students to go to mediation, to review cases with deans, and to talk with teachers about the program. Several staff developers expressed the view that self-referrals are the hallmark of successful schools, and that these tend to occur in schools in which there is "no stigma attached to going to mediation"--e.g., the program does not have the reputation for being "nerdy" because all the mediators are "goody-goodies," the program is visible and well publicized, and the staff as a whole subscribes to mediation. Successful schools, one staff developed noted, are "open to teacher-student and teacher-teacher mediations."

Publicizing mediation services. Staff developers cited a variety of strategies that have proved successful in publicizing mediation services, most involving the student mediators

themselves who, as one respondent put it, "sell the program to others." These included classroom demonstrations with mediation roleplays; assembly presentations of songs, poems, and raps written by team members; banners and posters; t-shirt days; lunchroom booths; and student-written pamphlets and public addresses system announcements. One school sponsored a Conflict Resolution Week consisting of numerous student-led activities aimed at heightening staff and student awareness of the program; in another school the peer mediators described the program to an art class, which made posters about it--thereby involving other students in a direct and interesting way.

Insuring lack of interference with regular instruction. Strategies employed by schools to reduce fears about the conflict resolution curriculum taking away from subject-area instruction, according to the staff developers, included encouraging teachers implementing it for the first time to begin slowly--i.e., to teach one conflict resolution lesson with one class once a week--in order to become comfortable with the curriculum and creative in teaching it. They also urged teachers to use "teachable moments" during subject-area instruction to integrate conflict resolution issues and themes, such as examining conflict in a lesson about the Civil War. One social studies teacher, for example, taught a lesson entitled, "How did England 'dis' the Colonies?" Staff developers believed, too, that it was important to help schools understand that "nothing is lost in teaching conflict resolution--in fact, something important is gained."

Encouraging schoolwide support. In addition to publicizing mediation in the ways described above, successful schools encouraged widespread support largely by creating a climate of overall acceptance for conflict resolution within the school--e.g., by having the curriculm teachers teach other teachers' classes from time to time, making presentations (including videos) at Parent Association meetings, conducting workshops for the entire faculty directed at explaining conflict resolution and stimulating discussion, disseminating booklets of warm-up exercises that teachers of non-STOP classes can use, and involving paraprofessionals and parents (e.g., parent-teacher teams who co-teach STOP lessons).

One staff developer said that evidence of success, such as "tough kids becoming leaders," went a long way toward winning the support of others. Another staff developer noted that in one school the principal attended training for the curriculum teachers, and on one occasion even co-mediated a case with the project coordinator involving a conflict between two groups of students after several sessions led by the peer mediators failed to result in an agreement.

Encouraging parent participation. According to the parent staff developers, schools that were most successful in encouraging parent participation were those that made parents feel truly welcome and were responsive to their needs. This included providing childcare and carfare to facilitate attendance, scheduling both day and evening workshops, providing

food at parent events, giving sufficient advance notice about activities, having someone (preferably a parent) available to translate for non-English speaking parents, and dedicating space in the school for a parents' room. One principal conducted a tour of the school especially for parents and made it clear that she was approachable. Project coordinators in successful schools established personal contact with parents and made it clear that they have a valued place in the school. One coordinator made a point of calling parents when nothing was wrong but to report something positive--e.g., to tell them that their child did a great job as a mediator that day. In some schools project coordinators attended parent activities (including conflict resolution workshops) and assisted where appropriate, created in-school programs that provided opportunities for social interaction and educational experiences, got to know parents personally by being available to help with problems, and in various ways facilitated their participation in the school--e.g., making security arrangements for workshops, obtaining names of key resource people, and providing refreshments.

Other project staff supported parent participation, as one staff developer put it, "by putting a human face on the parent-teacher relationship"--e.g., introducing themselves to parents when they are in the school, distributing flyers about parent workshops, making announcements about parent training in classrooms, providing in-school childcare during parent training sessions, and co-facilitating at parent workshops.

Overall role of school staff. Apart from describing how successful schools dealt with particular issues, the staff developers commented on the overall role of school staff. Principals in these schools were not only philosophically committed to the project, but assumed an active, hands-on role in supporting it and often modelled the principles it espoused. They made their appreciation known and praised the peer mediators for their contribution to reducing violence in the school.

Apart from tending to the numerous logistical issues essential to the project, effective coordinators encouraged broad participation in the program by delegating tasks to other committed people, met with project staff regularly to facilitate communication and collaboration, participated in training activities, and were, as one staff developer said, "enthusiastic and willing to empower young people." In addition, some coordinators took the initiative in establishing a closer tie between the school and the larger community, as demonstrated by one coordinator who had the peer mediators make a presentation about the STOP program at a local merchants association meetings and offer their assistance in dealing with students who are disruptive to business.

In general, project team staff tended to be open and flexible, demonstrated by their willingness to learn the principles of conflict resolution and explore ways of using them in their relationships with students and others. In addition, the more successful STOP schools tended to have a more integrated

or holistic approach to the program, reflected, for example, in training of the project coordinator in all three program components and collaboration among team members from different groups--e.g., involvement of peer mediators in the training of parents, and the co-teaching of lessons by parents and teachers. Importantly, too team project staff were committed to "owning the project" after STOP staff leave and implementing it independently.

The role of staff other than the project team varied, both with respect to the nature and extent of their involvement, although it seemed to exist on a small scale, overall. One staff developer indicated that nonparticipating teachers sometimes offered to observe their colleagues give demonstration lessons and provide feedback; non-STOP teachers in one school with a diverse population assisted by translating some of the curriculum's colloquialisms (e.g., "put-downs") into Chinese.

FACTORS IMPEDING IMPLEMENTATION

In the opinion of the principals, factors that have impeded the project's implementation included lack of time--to mediate cases, train participants, teach the curriculum, do the necessary paperwork; inadequate parent involvement; lack of referrals; belief on the part of some individuals that students can't handle mediations; and inadequate understanding of the project at the outset and of what implementing it would entail. One respondent remarked that the violence-prone society in which we live made in

difficult to persuade students that there are ways other than fighting to resolve differences.

Project coordinators cited lack of district support, insufficient time to accomplish everything that was needed, teachers' reluctance to release students and unwillingness to take on something new. The lack of a separate mediation room, "a constant for kids to come to," impeded the project's progress in one school, according to the project coordinator there.

Lack of schoolwide support, evidenced in part by the reluctance of some teachers and deans to refer cases to mediation, and inadequate parent involvement were among the impediments to success noted by the mediation teachers. One teacher reflected on the magnitude of some of the problems presented and the depth of the anger students feel, which cannot be resolved through mediation.

From the vantage point of the curriculum teachers, the major impediment to the project's success revolved around insufficient time to teach the STOP curriculum (because of other curriculum requirements and the fact that some classes met only two periods a week), or for team members to meet. One teacher thought it was "overambitious" to try to implement all three components, and argued that the program should focus on the curriculum and mediation pieces. The fact that not all teachers taught or supported the curriculum was another drawback.

In describing factors that impeded schools' success, the curriculum staff developers cited, for the most part, the failure

of school administrators to understand or support the program adequately. One principal, according to the staff developer, wanted the staff developer to teach the curriculum, was not supportive of parent involvement, and not believing in student empowerment wanted only adults to mediate disputes. In another school, the staff developer said that the principal did not release school staff for training or relieve them of some of their regular responsibilities, and expected little time to be devoted to teaching the curriculum, in part because of an "overconcern with test scores." Further, in personal interactions with staff members, this principal did not practice the concepts inherent in conflict resolution. A misunderstanding of another kind posed a different problem in one school, where according to the staff developer, teachers and students expected too much from the project and depended on it to solve all crises.

In addition to insufficient coordinator time and lack of support from school administrators, the major impediments to school success in implementing the project, in the opinion of the mediation staff developers, were poor planning, recruitment of people not really interested in the program, and unrealistic expectations of immediate results. Elaborating on the latter point, one staff developer maintained that "programs, like individuals, need time to grow...[but] some people are used to A.T.M.s [automatic teller machines] and remote controls where they get immediate results."

Parent staff developers reiterated problems attributable to lack of principal commitment and weak leadership cited by other staff developers. They also noted lack of a cohesive STOP team that communicates effectively, evident primarily in large schools, and a school environment that does not allow for open discussion and debate. Missing in other schools was sufficient encouragement of parent involvement, particularly in schools where many languages and dialects are spoken and parents cannot communicate with school personnel, do not understand how the school functions, and generally feel intimidated. One respondent also commented on obstacles encountered in covering the curriculum with large bilingual parent groups necessitating a lot of translation, as well as problems with the curriculum itself such as "'I' messages that are out of touch with people's reality."

SCHOOL SELF-MANAGEMENT

Perceptions of Needs

Since schools are expected to operate conflict resolution activities on their own after three years of project support, another issue explored as part of this evaluation was schools' progress toward self-management. Accordingly, principals were asked what they believed was necessary for their school to manage this conflict resolution project independently. Their primary concerns were training and otherwise supporting project team teachers and students. In fact, several respondents said that they would need to "maintain linkage" with the cooperating

agencies or require "some external backup," reflections of their anxiety about functioning without at least some outside support. Another concern, articulated by several principals, was related either to getting more people to "buy into" the project or sustaining the interest and commitment of those currently involved. The comment of one principal in a low-implementing school seemed to reinforce its characterization as a poor functioning school and pointed to its weak leadership: "We need an external overseer to monitor the project and make sure it's moving along."

All of the project coordinators believed that they needed more training, not only in the conflict resolution process but in training other school staff participants. One respondent thought that project schools might consider pooling their resources and handle training collaboratively. A coordinator from a high-implementing school said that the staff was investigating grants as a way of continuing financial support for the project.

Curriculum staff developers emphasized the need for money and time to train curriculum teachers, as well as support from school and district administrators. One respondent said that funds for off-site sessions would be preferable; another believed that there needed to be on-site "experts" in the school willing to serve as mentors. The importance of "someone with teaching experience who loved the project to spearhead it and teach others," as another staff developer put it, points again to the conviction on the part of project staff about the importance of

dedicated and competent school staff to sustain school-based conflict resolution. The notion of school commitment was also reflected in the comment of another curriculum staff developer who stressed the importance of "ongoing meetings devoted to strategizing, as if conflict resolution were a department in the school." Also mentioned was money for materials, food, and a full-time coordinator.

Mediation staff developers, commenting on what was needed for schools to operate a successful peer mediation program, reiterated what curriculum staff developers said--i.e., a committed coordinator with enough time to manage the project, a school-centered capacity to train and support teachers and student mediators, and a supportive administration "to give time to the staff, set the tone, and send a message to the school that this program is important." One respondent suggested that schools should "cross train" staff in all components so that team members "feel connected to the program and all its elements," adding that there should be a coordinator for each component.

Transition to Independence

Role of principals. In response to a question asking how their school is facilitating the transition to independence, several principals said, in effect, that they were not doing anything yet--either because this was their first year in the project, or because they were not aware that they would have to function on their own in the near future. The other respondents referred to a variety of activities: staff participation in

transitional training; meeting with business groups to discuss funding; fighting for a full-time coordinator position; exploring the possibility of involving student alumni in future training; and trying to establish a site in each borough for training the peer mediators,

Role of project coordinators. Most of the project coordinators mentioned that curriculum and mediation teachers in their school were participating in transitional training intended to prepare them to serve as trainers of other staff and students next year. (Participants include selected teachers in half of the STOP schools.) Three coordinators stated that they either hadn't begun a transitional program (medium-implementing schools) or hadn't even begun thinking about the transition to self-management (low-implementing school).

Role of curriculum staff developers. One curriculum staff developer, acknowledging that transition training is a difficult process and that project staff need to deal with "separation anxiety," said that she was doing a lot of "stroking" and "intense planning" with teachers, focusing on what they can realistically do next year when project staff are no longer in the school. The teacher trainers, she added, are being given opportunities to practice in front of their peers with help from the staff developers, and are being encouraged to deal openly with their fears and be honest about their limitations. Another staff developer, whose schools were not in their third year of implementation (and would therefore have continued support from

project STOP next year), explained that she was, nevertheless, working with the project coordinators to identify mentor teachers and schedule time for the curriculum teachers to meet on a weekly basis, thereby setting the stage for school-based leadership. Another curriculum staff developer reported that she maintains a "hands-off style" and rarely models teaching the curriculum, preferring instead to encourage teachers to recognize their own strengths, and to meet regularly in small groups to share ideas and support each other. Believing that it is important for the project coordinator to be well trained in the STOP curriculum if schools are to teach conflict resolution on their own, the staff developer was also spending a lot of time with the coordinators to ensure that they would be able to support the curriculum teachers, both now and in the future.

Role of mediation staff developers. In addition to participating in transitional training activities, the mediation staff developers described various ways in which they were facilitating schools' movement to greater independence: assisting team members in setting short- and long-term goals; asking that students sit in on meetings dealing with the recruitment of new peer mediators so that they become acquainted with the process; having coordinators play a more visible role by leading team meetings; encouraging principals to attend after-school meetings and to think about funding sources and other issues affecting the continuance of the project.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING OR ASSISTANCE FOR STAFF DEVELOPERS

In view of the key role project staff developers play in supporting schools, one interview question asked them what additional training or assistance, if any, they need to better enable them to meet their responsibilities. Among the areas mentioned by the mediation staff developers were the following: training in counseling and handling bias-related conflicts; opportunities to network with individuals doing similar work in other schools and in other cities; and observing professional mediations in settings other than schools. One staff developer wanted to know more about general school policies and legal issues, such as those affecting the student-teacher relationship; another respondent noted the lack of contact with the staff developers responsible for the curriculum and parent components, and expressed the need to understand these aspects of the project better. Two of staff developers wanted to spend more time in their schools in order to establish the rapport needed and to be more available to assist them--being assigned fewer schools or having access to a car were suggested as ways of addressing this problem.

Among the additional assistance requested by curriculum staff developers were training in being mentors rather than presenters, and a special education curriculum with strategies for implementing it.

The parent staff developers referred to help in doing outreach and recruitment, a parent organizer or liaison based in

the schools, stipends for parent participants, curriculum materials that relate more to parents' experiences, and resources for working with inner city families in crisis. Elaborating on the latter point, one staff developer mused: "The training is good, but it opens up the door to so much need. We do not have grassroots training. What do I advise? What can we say when parents come to us with critical problems?"

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM IMPACT

Project Team Members

OER interviewers asked project team staff to assess the impact the project has had on the ways in which students and they themselves relate to others, and on the level of violence in their school. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=very little and 5=a great deal, respondents rated seven items related to various changes in attitudes and behavior. The findings (summarized in Table 1) indicated that, overall, all respondent groups believed that there had been improvements in interpersonal relationships, including the handling of conflict.

Commenting on other ways in which the project has affected school climate, respondents from all constituent groups said that people were now aware that there are alternatives to violence and a place in the school to go where disputes can be settled peacefully. Other benefits mentioned included the development of students' (especially the mediators') self-esteem, greater attentiveness on the part of students and staff to the underlying causes of conflict, and the establishment of guidelines for

Table 1

Project Team Staff Ratings[a] of
Project Impact on Attitudes and Behavior

Attitudes and Behaviors	Constituent Group: Project Coordinator (Interview) (N=9)	Project Coordinator (Survey)[b] (N=6)	Principal (N=9)	Curriculum Teacher (N=7)	Mediation Teacher (N=8)	Parents (N=4)	Total (N=43)
Increasing students' sensitivity to different cultures and values	2.9	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.5	4.3	3.8
Helping students handle conflict more effectively	4.6	4.6	3.6	4.8	4.5	5.0	4.5
Heightening understanding of students' needs	4.4	4.6	3.2	4.7	4.1	4.8	4.3
Improving personal interactions with others	4.8	4.6	4.1	4.7	4.0	4.8	4.5
Decreasing the level of violence in the school	4.3	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.4	4.5	4.1
Improving students' communication skills	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.5
Encouraging a more cooperative school spirit	3.9	3.3	3.8	4.3	1	4.5	4.0

[a]The ratings were based on a 5-point scale, with "1" representing "very little" and "5" representing "a great deal."

[b]In calculating the ratings of T.M.P. survey respondents, the ratings of the project coordinator in the one school new to the project in 1993-94 were omitted because they were substantially lower for all items, suggesting that changes in attitudes and behavior evolve over time.

- All constituent groups believed that there had been improvements in interpersonal relationships, including the handling of conflicts.

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respectful and appropriate communication. One project coordinator from a high-implementing school noted that "in a peaceful environment there is more work that gets done." The coordinator in a medium-implementing school believed that the project has fostered student leadership. "When adults step out of the picture," she explained, "kids can sit down together and discuss things." She went on to say that the project brings out hidden qualities in children--they are in control with a sense of direction." Two project coordinators said that while there has been a reduction in severe problems, there has not been an effect on the entire school.

Some teachers said that they spent a greater portion of classroom time dealing with conflict after the project was introduced in their school, whereas others said they spent less time. However, in both instances the change was construed positively. In the former case, more time was devoted to discussing problems before they escalated; in the latter instance, students reportedly dealt more effectively with conflict situations on their own, or peer mediators in the class intervened and proposed that the dispute be resolved through mediation.

In dealing with their teenage children, parents reported expressing their anger less and listening more. As one explained, "Before I'd get angry. Now I cool off...and discuss it [the problem] without screaming." Relationships with school personnel were better, too. Parents said that they felt more

comfortable talking with teachers and security staff, and were able to avoid verbal encounters. One parent said that she was more patient and better able to control her temper when asked to sign in and fill out forms, perhaps also reflecting a better understanding of school procedures as a result of greater contact with the school. Parents also commented on using strategies they had learned in exchanges with neighbors and with people at work. As one respondent said, "I apply the same listening skills. Never talk down to anyone. Everyone has an opinion and a right to this opinion."

Peer Mediators

Attitudes toward mediation. Asked what they liked best about being a peer mediator, all students said that they enjoyed helping people resolve conflicts. As one mediator put it:

> When I see someone that has a conflict resolve it, I can see that they are pleased. When they come into the room, I can see that they want to fight by the look on their faces. When we are done with the mediation sessions they no longer look like that.

Several student mediators said that what they liked best was that the training has helped them in their own lives. Some illustrative comments: "It has helped me meet friends"; I am less shy now than I was before"; and "It has helped me with conflicts at home."

Students also commented on several aspects of being a mediator that they liked least. Some referred to feeling powerless to change the attitudes or behavior of other students. As one peer mediator explained, "Some kids don't really want to

solve their problems. Some disputants just want to fight." On the other hand, some of the mediators claimed that some students are fearful of the process. In the words of one mediator, "Sometimes kids are too scared, thinking that the mediator will go to the principal or the dean and tell them what happened and they will get in trouble." The peer mediators also admitted having difficulty with their role in the mediation process. One explained, "Sometimes I know that one person is guilty and it's hard to stay neutral"; another said, "It's hard to stay neutral. Sometimes I think the fights are about stupid things." One student admitted that it was hard to live up to other people's expectations of them.

The other major problem about being a mediator was the intrusion on students' time and other activities. They objected to giving up their lunch periods or missing a favorite class to mediate a dispute, which happened frequently.

Two-thirds of the peer mediators reported that other students in their school think mediation is a good idea. Those who support it do so, according to the mediators, either to avoid suspensions or because they believe it is a good alternative to fighting. Those who are opposed to it, on the other hand, are perceived as being streetwise--i.e., "they don't believe that talking things out can make a difference."

Impact of mediator experience. Peer mediators reported that the most important things they learned by being a mediator included remaining neutral when mediating a case, and effectively

using techniques such as role reversal and roleplaying. As one student one, "I've become good at putting students in one another's shoes to see how they feel."

Over half of the peer mediators (60 percent) stated that their relationships with friends have improved. One student explained: "I can communicate better with them; it [being a mediator] has made me listen and understand them more." However, 25 percent of the students asserted that being a mediator has negatively affected their relationships with their friends. They believed that some of their friends are resentful because their responsibilities as peer mediators means that they have less time to spend with their friends. Other mediators said that their relationships had not changed.

Most students (80 percent) stated that their experience as a peer mediator has had a positive effect on their relationships with other students in the school. As one mediator explained, "I learned to go up to kids I didn't get along with and make friends with them." For the most part, the peer mediators believed that they have to "act as an example" for other students. Some students, however, acknowledged that their relationships with other students had suffered, as in the case of one mediator who said that "sometimes the disputants think I am taking sides and they get mad."

Most peer mediators (more than 80 percent) also indicated that they used their conflict resolution skills in their relationships with siblings, parents, and other relatives.

Several reported acting as a mediator to resolve family conflicts. As one student eloquently stated: " Sometimes I help mediate disputes in my family. I'm closer to them now because of this. I sit them down as a family and say we should talk. We are better able to resolve conflicts now than we were before I was a mediator." Half of the student mediators also said that their relationships with teachers have improved. One respondent reported, "I used to talk back to teachers. Now I've changed my attitude." Another mediator elaborated, saying "I never used to see the teacher's side, now I understand how they feel." One student summed up his feelings about being a peer mediator by saying simply, "I use my skills to help understand the world better."

Impact of mediation on school. OER interviewers asked peer mediators to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements describing improvements in students' attitudes and relationships with others, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The findings (presented in Table 2) indicated that the peer mediators believed that there had been positive changes in the ways in which students treat each other and deal with conflict. Nearly all (80 percent) of the mediators also believed that there is less violence in their school because mediation instills in students a better sense of values. "It teaches them what's right and what's wrong," one respondent proclaimed.

Table 2

Student Ratings[a] of Project Impact on Attitudes and Behavior

Attitudes and Behavior	Student Group: Peer Mediators (N=29)	Student Group: Curriculum Students (N=20)
Improved relationships with friends	4.1	4.5
Improved relationships with parents	3.6	3.8
Improved relationships with teachers	3.5	3.2
Improved students' feelings about themselves because they've become better at handling conflicts	4.7	4.2
Increased respect for others	4.5	4.5
Increased sensitivity to people who are different	4.2	4.8
Improved ability to look at another person's point of view	4.6	4.7
Improved ability to deal with conflict	4.9	4.6
Decreased use of name-calling in the school	2.9	3.1
Decreased use of verbal put-downs in the school	2.6	4.0
Increased caring for one another	4.0	4.9
Improved ability to express themselves during conflict	4.0	4.6

[a]The ratings were based on a 5-point scale, with "1" representing "very little" and "5" representing "a great deal."

- Peer mediators and curriculum students were in agreement that there had been positive changes in the ways in which students treat each other and deal with conflict.

Curriculum Students

Attitudes toward curriculum. Among those aspects of conflict resolution instruction that curriculum students (students who had received lessons on conflict resolution but who were not mediators) enjoyed most was being able to talk about different attitudes and stereotypes, listening to other students' opinions, and engaging in roleplays. Half of the curriculum students said that they had learned to resolve conflicts more effectively. As one student said, "It is better to talk it out than fight it out." Another student added, "Try not to start a fight. Walk away or tell somebody if someone is eager to fight." The other half of the curriculum students interviewed cited more general ways in which the STOP curriculum had helped them--e.g., how to get along with other people, how to respect others' opinions and feelings, how to compromise, and how to listen. As one student said, "I've learned to express my feelings more and get along with others, to respect people for who they are." Generally, the peer mediators believed that the curriculum has helped students to resolve conflicts without fighting, specifically by teaching them how to listen and how to think before acting. All students, in their opinion, would benefit from the STOP curriculum--in part because it teaches an important issue in a fun way. Several students thought the curriculum was so important and relevant to everyone's life that it should be taught to elementary school students.

Students' complaints (offered by less than half of the respondents) centered primarily on insufficient opportunities to participate in or act out the lessons (because the teacher did most of the talking), and discomfort in discussing what happens when a conflict escalates to the point of violence.

Impact of curriculum. In describing how they have used what they learned from the STOP lessons in their own lives, the curriculum students, like the peer mediators, commented on improved relationships with friends, family members, teachers, and to a lesser extent than the mediators, other students in the school. Perhaps the most dramatic example offered was the story told by one student who taught the conflict resolution skills he had learned in school to his older brother who now "...asks me nicely to borrow money, rather than beating it out of me as before."

Finally, interviewers asked curriculum students (as they had the peer mediators) to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements describing improvements in students' attitudes and relationships with others, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The findings (presented in Table 2) indicated that these students also believed that there had been positive changes in the ways in which students treat others and deal with conflict.

MOST IMPORTANT MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Reflecting on the most important measures of project success, school and Project STOP staff talked about issues

related both to its implementation and impact. Measures of successful implementation, which typically evolved over time, included the overall endorsement of the program by the entire school community (including parents), the incorporation of the STOP curriculum in teachers' instructional styles, a high level of awareness of mediation services, students mediating cases successfully, and an increase in the number of students who want to be mediators and in the number of disputants seeking out mediation on their own. One teacher's characterization of students' growing acceptance of mediation as a way of resolving conflict as "having the courage to seek a solution" is a poignant acknowledgment of how difficult the transition to mediation is for students accustomed to "fighting it out."

All respondents cited important quantitative changes that demonstrated improvements in attitudes and behavior--most notably, fewer fights in and around the school and fewer students participating in them, and reductions in the number of suspensions (reported by one school principal to be down from more than 250 last year to 70 this year). The image recounted by one staff developer of students trying to break up a fight in the schoolyard instead of egging the combatants on seems to say it all with regard to the project's impact on physical altercations.

Other important changes attributed to this conflict resolution project centered more on issues related to personal growth and development (for students, school personnel and parents), the quality of interpersonal relationships, and overall

school climate. Foremost among these changes were improved communication and social skills, heightened self-esteem, increased tolerance for differences, ability to express anger in positive ways, greater assumption of leadership in school by parents, perceptions of the school as a safer place, and improved relationships between parents and students (at home) and between teachers and students. Describing the overall change in school climate, one staff developer said, "What I hear and see when I walk down the hall and into the teachers' lounge--how people are treating one another, and what they are saying about one another."

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the project's success was the interest expressed by all of the teachers, peer mediators, and parents interviewed in continuing to participate in the project. Several graduating peer mediators said they would like to continue mediating in high school; the magnitude of the conviction expressed by one mediator was particularly impressive: "If there isn't a mediation program in my high school, I'll start one and train others." One parent believed that a course in conflict resolution should be offered for course credit and required in all schools.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The findings from OER's 1993-94 evaluation of STOP and the Teen Mediation Project point to major areas of accomplishment. Reflecting on the most important measures of success, project and school staff commented on issues related both to the project's implementation and impact. Measures of successful implementation included the endorsement of the program by many in the school community, the incorporation of the STOP curriculum in teachers' instructional styles, recognition of alternatives to violence and a place to go in the school where problems can be resolved peacefully, students mediating cases successfully, and an increase in the number of students who want to be mediators and in the number of self-referrals to mediation.

All respondents cited important quantitative changes reflected in improvements in attitudes and behavior--most notably, fewer fights and fewer students participating in them, and reductions in the number of suspensions. Other important changes centered around personal growth and development (on the part of students, school personnel, and parents), the quality of personal relationships (at home and at work, as well as in school), and a more positive school climate. Among these changes were greater attentiveness to the underlying causes of conflict, improved communication and social skills, heightened self-esteem and assumption of leadership for positive change, increased tolerance for differences, and perceptions of the school as a

safer place. That all participants expressed an interest in continuing in the project bears further witness to its success.

FACILITATING FACTORS

Among the factors that school team members perceived as contributing to its success were a committed and competent project coordinator and staff (mediation and curriculum teachers), dedicated and talented student mediators, excellent training and ongoing support from the project staff developers, and a supportive school administration. In describing successful schools, the staff developers emphasized the importance of an energetic, capable project coordinator with sufficient time to devote to the project, and a principal who assumes an active, supportive role--both in facilitating its implementation, encouraging schoolwide support, and interacting with staff and students in ways that model the conflict resolution principles espoused by the project. Mentioned, too, were a well publicized mediation referral system, peer mediators and mediation teachers who are representative of the school as a whole (in the case of students, including those who have in the past been "negative" leaders as well as those who are seen as role models); schoolwide recognition of the value of mediation and instruction in conflict resolution; a willingness to empower students to resolve disputes without adult intervention; and a respectful, welcoming attitude toward parents that encourages their involvement and is responsive to their needs. In addition, more successful STOP schools tended to have a more integrated approach to the program,

reflected, for example, in the collaboration among team members "across" project components--e.g., involvement of peer mediators in the training of parents.

IMPEDING FACTORS

All respondents agreed that major impediments to project implementation were lack of time--e.g., to mediate cases, train participants, teach the curriculum, discuss problems and share ideas, do the necessary paperwork; and lack of support from the principal and staff not directly involved in the project. Other problems cited were inadequate understanding of the nature of the project and the level of commitment required to implement it, lack of a separate mediation room, recruitment of people who were not really interested in participating in the project, and insufficient parent involvement. That some people had unrealistic expectations of what the project could accomplish or how soon desired changes in attitudes and behvavior would be evident, were other drawbacks noted.

IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS COMPONENTS

In assessing the importance of each of the project components in helping students to manage conflict effectively, all respondents agreed that peer mediation was essential, primarily because it provides real-life opportunities for students to put conflict resolution concepts into practice. The curriculum component was, for the most part, considered important by respondents in schools that were already implementing it (STOP) as well as those which were not (T.M.P.) because it

exposed more students to alternative ways of dealing with conflict than could be reached through peer mediation alone. Those principals and teachers who disagreed, were concerned about the lack of time to teach it given other instructional priorities, a problem which some project coordinators and staff developers believed could be addressed by showing teachers how to integrate conflict resolution into subject-area instruction.

Nearly all respondents affirmed the importance of training parents in conflict resolution, both to reinforce at home what children learn at school, and to provide parents with important life skills; however, most respondents also acknowledged that this was the weakest component because of difficulties schools face in recruiting parents, scheduling activities at times when they can attend, and communicating with large numbers of parents who do not speak English.

SCHOOL SELF-MANAGEMENT

Since schools are expected to conduct conflict resolution activities on their own after three years of project support, their progress toward self-management was also explored as part of this evaluation. Schools' greatest concerns centered around providing the needed training and support to current and new team members, sustaining the interest of those already involved, and encouraging the "buy-in" of others. The staff developers stressed the importance of money, strong school leadership, and time for all project activities, but especially for project coordinators to fulfill their numerous responsibilities.

Responses of principals and project coordinators indicated that schools were in different stages of making the transition to independence. In some, for example, select staff were participating in transitional training (directed at equipping them to train other school staff and students next year), new sources of funding were being investigated, as was the possibility of establishing a site for training in each borough and involving student alumni in training. On the other hand, some schools had given no thought to assuming project ownership--either because this was their first year implementing it, or because they were not aware that they would have to function on their own in the near future.

In addition to participating in transitional training activities, the staff developers reported facilitating schools' movement toward independence in various ways--e.g., helping staff to identify short- and long-term goals, working with project coordinators to ensure that they are able to support the various project components, assisting in the identification of teachers who can assume leadership roles, encouraging team members to meet on a regular basis to plan for the future, and having students sit in on meetings dealing with the recruitment of peer mediators to acquaint them with the process. Acknowledging that the transition to independence is a difficult process, staff developers also encouraged school staff to deal openly with their fears and be honest about their limitations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings, OER makes the following recommendations:

- Training in conflict resolution should be extended to other key school personnel not currently participating in the project in order to encourage broader support for the project's implementation--e.g., willingness to release students for project activities and refer students to mediation, and to more effectively infuse conflict resolution into the culture of the school.

- Staff development for curriculum teachers should include assistance in incorporating conflict resolution concepts into regular subject-area instruction. This will present a more integrated approach to learning and assuage the concerns of some principals and teachers that teaching conflict resolution takes time away from academic instruction.

- In view of the pivotal role of the project coordinator, schools need to find ways of providing individuals who serve in this capacity with sufficient time to devote to their school and STOP-related responsibilities. In addition, coordinators should trained in all components in order to facilitate their schools' transition to self-management of the project. Training other participants in more than one component and encouraging greater collaboration among them would similarly promote independence, as well as a more integrated approach to project implementation.

- Ongoing training for peer mediators should continue to focus on helping them refine and extend their mediation-related skills, and also assist them in dealing with the negative attitudes and behaviors of some of their peers. Further, student mediators need to understand that conflict resolution is an evolving process that effects change over time.

- Peer mediators and mediation teachers should be a diverse group which is representative of the schools as a whole with regard to race, gender, and ethnic diversity; in addition, the student mediators should be selected from among the entire student population--e.g., special education and English as a Second Language students, students who are role models as well as those who have been "negative" leaders.

- Schools with limited resources should consider staggering the implementation of various project components, beginning with the one(s) they can handle most effectively; schools that do not already have a broad base of parent involvement might consider directing their energies initially at making parents feel welcome in the school more generally and establishing a small cadre of active parents who, in turn, could encourage parent participation in conflict resolution training.

- The selection of schools should be based on project-developed criteria that include the level of commitment and support considered necessary to ensure a reasonable degree of success; and schools should demonstrate at the outset that they have a clear understanding of what the project entails, the support they can expect to receive, and the specific ways in which they are expected to support its implementation.